

NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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NICK CARTER RESCUES A DAUGHTER OR THE JUNIOR PARTNER'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR



NICK SAW AT A GLANCE THAT HE WAS IN THE PRESENCE OF A TRAGEDY.



NICK CARTER WEEKLY.

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Nick Carter Rescues a Daughter; OR, THE JUNIOR PARTNER'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

THE DEAD GIRL.

Nick Carter glanced at his watch as he entered the street door of the Borden Building, New York City.

It was exactly half-past five o'clock in the afternoon.

"I am just on time," mused the great detective, as he hurried toward the elevator.

Neatly folded and stowed away in one of his inside pockets was a note, which he had received by a messenger on the forenoon of that day. The note, written on a typewriter, was not signed, and ran as follows:

"NICHOLAS CARTER, New York City. Dear Sir: Please call at room 59, Borden Building, at half-past five o'clock this afternoon on important business. Do not fail."

There was such an air of mystery about the message that Nick concluded he would respond, and promptly to the minute he was at the place named in the note.

The Borden Building is one of those struc-

tures in lower New York City which are used almost exclusively as offices.

It was Saturday afternoon, and when Nick found that the elevator was not running he was not surprised.

Evidently most of the offices in the building closed on Saturdays before this late hour.

A young man neatly, almost foppishly, dressed, had entered the building ten seconds ahead of Nick and was near the first landing on the stairs walking up when Nick placed his foot on the first step ready to follow.

Just then there came ringing through the building the sound of the footsteps of some one flying down the stairs in precipitate haste.

Nick, by looking up, saw that the person making the furious descent was a boy about fourteen years old.

The well-dressed young man stopped when he heard the boy coming, and as the latter reached him he grasped the lad by the coat, and brought him up with a jerk.

"What in thunder ails you?" growled the young man.

For a moment the boy could not utter a word. His face was white as chalk, his teeth were chattering in his head, and he trembled so that it seemed he must fall in a heap.

The young man gave him a vigorous shake and cried:

"Can't you speak? What have you done? Where are you going?"

Then the lad found power to chatter:

"Oh-h, Mr. Ga-a-ay, she's de-de-dead."

"She's dead? Who's dead, you fool?"

"Mi-Miss Langdon," gasped the lad.

"Miss Langdon dead? Why, what do you mean? Speak!"

"She's been mu-mu-mur-dered."

"What! Where?"

"Up there in the of-of-office."

"Are you telling me the truth?"

"Indeed I am. Somebody sh-sh-shot her."

"Then go call the police, and be quick," said the young man, as he let go of the boy's collar and hastened his ascent of the stairs.

The lad continued his precipitous descent to the street, and Nick followed the young man upward. He saw the latter stop on the fifth floor, and disappear through an open door-way.

When Nick reached the same place, he noted with much interest that the No. 59 was painted on the door through which the other man had passed.

Instantly he asked himself:

"Has my mysterious note anything to do with what occurred beyond this door?"

Nick passed through the open door, and found himself inside a large general office used by a law firm.

The name of the firm was also on the door. It was:

BRIDGELY & BYKE,
Attorneys-at-Law.

At the other end of the room a door stood ajar, giving entrance to a private office. Be-

yond this door Nick heard high-pitched voices in altercation.

He rightly guessed that whatever the tragedy might be, its location was in that rear office.

Therefore, he crossed the large room, threw the communicating door open, and, standing in the doorway, took in the scene at a sweeping glance.

There were two men in the medium-sized office.

One was the man who had preceded him up the stairs.

The man whom the boy had called Mr. Gay.

The other was an older man, perhaps thirty-five years of age, tall, stockily built, with a slight stoop in the shoulder, possessing a rather cold, cynical-looking face, and a pair of gray eyes, which had a habit of trying to bore holes into everything upon which they centered.

This man at the time of Nick's appearance stood leaning against a flat-topped table with one side of his face toward the door. He saw Nick as soon as the latter pushed the door wide open.

The other man's back was toward the door, and Nick's presence was not known to him immediately.

He was just saying, his remarks being addressed to the older man:

"Do you think anybody will believe your story?"

The speaker was pointing to something before him.

That something was the form of a young woman seated in a chair before an open scroll-topped desk. One arm hung helplessly at her side, and she had, apparently, partly fallen forward until her head and left arm rested upon the desk.

Nick recognized in this form the victim of a tragedy.

Before the detective had time to move a step forward, the elder man, with those gray eyes focused upon Nick's face, said:

"What do you want?"

"I want to know what has been going on here."

The younger man had wheeled around facing Nick, and he, in turn, asked:

"Who are you?"

"I am Nick Carter."

To Nick's surprise the young man moved back several steps as if annoyed or confused, and the elder scowled without removing his gray eyes from Nick's face.

The latter advanced to the desk where the form of the young woman reclined, and made a quick examination.

There was a bullet wound in her right temple. The ball had pierced her brain, and she was dead.

On the right hand was a glove into which the fingers had been fitted, but the thumb and upper part of the hand were still bare.

The first inference drawn from this fact was that she had been shot while engaged in putting on her gloves preparatory to leaving the office.

In the minute which followed, Nick made one of his lightning ocular inspections of the premises, in which very little was left to be discovered.

At the end of that time the sound of many rushing footsteps was heard coming up the stairs.

All this time the two men in the room with him remained silent and inactive.

Nick walked into the main office, and met the first man of the ascending throng at the door.

It was a young policeman, whom Nick happened to know quite well.

"Ah, Brown!" exclaimed Nick, confronting the officer at the threshold, "I'm glad 'tis you. You'll understand me without a lengthy explanation."

"Who are you?" panted Brown, for Nick of course, was in disguise.

"I am Nick Carter. There has been a crime committed back there, and until I know more about it you must keep everybody out. Let none of these curiosity-seekers intrude."

"I am at your service, Mr. Carter," said Brown. "Lord, I'm glad you're here. Seems to me you always bob up when anything happens. What is it? Murder?"

"I want to find out. Is there anybody with you?"

"Yes, McCarthy is coming, but he's so fat it's hard and slow work for him to get up all these stairs. Here he is now."

Some one rapped on the door at that instant. Brown admitted a policeman, who was blowing like a porpoise.

"Bad cess to thim shtairs!" gasped McCarthy, "an' thor had bin tin more ov 'em, sure it's a dead mon I'd be this minute."

"Well, McCarthy, just take charge of this door, and see that no one enters who has no right. Those who have a right, and whom I want to come in, are persons who have been in this building within the last hour, and the boy who carried you the news."

Brown opened the door and beckoned to the boy to enter. The latter drew back as if about to fly again, but a man near by grasped him by the shoulder and pushed him toward the door.

"Who are you?" inquired Nick.

"I'm the janitor," was the reply.

"Then come in, too."

Still keeping hold of the terrified boy, the janitor entered the office and the door was once more closed in the face of the crowd, which by this time numbered nearly a score.

"Brown, I want you to summon the coroner, or one of his deputies just as soon as you can get him here."

Brown asked no questions, but left on his mission instantly.

"What's your name?" asked Nick, turning to the janitor.

"Bush—John Bush, sir."

"Then, Mr. Bush, I want you to look out among the people in that crowd in the hall and identify anybody who has offices in this building."

McCarthy held the door ajar while the janitor scanned the eager faces in the crowd.

"There is Mr. Grote, Mr. Kennedy, and Miss Lucas," was his report.

"Tell them to come in," commanded Nick, in a low voice.

"Will Mr. Grote, Mr. Kennedy, and Miss Lucas come in?" said the janitor, addressing his words to the collection of people in the hall.

The three persons answering to these names crowded their way forward, and were admitted.

Then the door closed again.

To the five people inside, not including the policeman, Nick said:

"You will wait in this room until further orders. Meanwhile, officer," turning and addressing McCarthy, "let no one else in until Brown returns with the coroner, and see that nobody meantime leaves by that door."

Nick turned toward the inner room to find the young, stylishly-dressed man looking out, much interested at what had been going on in the larger office.

CHAPTER II.

THE GLOVE ON THE DEAD GIRL'S HAND.

Nick returned to the rear room. His first act was probably a surprise to both the men whom he had found there when he first entered.

In short, he requested the two men to step into the outer office.

They complied rather hesitatingly.

He followed them, and closed the communicating door.

Then he coolly took a seat near by, and waited for the coroner.

Fifteen minutes after Brown started to bring the coroner, he returned in company with that official.

Nick met the coroner quietly, and lost no time in making himself known to him.

Then he requested Brown to send the crowd on the outside about their business, and again cautioned McCarthy to let no one of those in the large office go out.

This done, he preceded the coroner into the rear office, and closed the door behind them.

The coroner took a quick inventory of the surroundings, and then turned to Nick for information.

The detective related everything just as it occurred to him, except that he made no mention of the type-written note which had brought him to the scene at such a strange time.

"And what have you learned of the case from those two men, Mr. Carter?" inquired the coroner.

"Nothing. I have asked not a single question, preferring to wait till you got here to receive the story of the case as these people can or will give it."

"That is quite complimentary, I am sure, Mr. Carter. Whom shall we question first?"

"Before we question anybody let me tell you about a few things I have noted in this office."

"All right—go on."

"The victim was shot in the right temple."

"I see."

"From the position of the body the shot must have been fired by some one standing in front of that window, or the shot must have come from across the street and through the open window."

The coroner noticed that the desk on which the dead woman had fallen was almost

exactly in front of an open window and about twelve feet from it.

He glanced across the street and discovered that a window in an opposite building was directly in line with the office window and the desk.

"You think the shot was fired by some one standing in that window over there?"

"I did not say so. On the contrary, I found this pistol lying directly under the victim's dependent hand."

"Suicide?"

"I am expressing no opinion, just stating facts," quietly remarked Nick, as the coroner took a pistol from him and examined it.

The weapon was of Smith & Wesson make, had six chambers, was peculiarly mounted, and on a silver plate inlaid in the handle were the initials "E. L."

One of the chambers contained the empty shell of a cartridge. The other four were loaded.

The coroner stooped, and inspected the wound in the head of the victim.

"I see no powder marks on her face," he said, looking up at Nick.

"There are none. Besides, I call your attention to the condition of the right hand."

The coroner's eyes turned quickly to the hand of the corpse, which hung at the side of the body.

"Ha! I see. She was putting on her glove, and couldn't have handled the pistol herself."

"Not unless she fired the shot with her left hand."

"But the bullet entered the right temple?"

"I am not sure of it."

"But see. Here is the wound," cried the coroner, pointing to the little blue spot on the side of the girl's face, which was turned up to their gaze.

"Yes, that is a wound. But the bullet might have come out at that place instead of going in."

"Oh! Then there is a wound on the other side of the head; the side which lies upon the desk."

"I think there is."

"You think. Don't you know—have you not raised the head to see?"

"I have not raised the head to see, but I know there is."

"Why, how do you know if you have not seen?"

"Because here is the fatal bullet, and it not only went into her head, but clean through it."

"Where did you find it?"

"In that corner of the room back there,"

"Why, that is almost behind the body?"

"Yes. The bullet passed through her head, hit the steam coil on the other side of the desk, and carromed at an acute angle, fetching up in the corner where I found it."

"It was surely not suicide," mused the coroner.

"It may not have been," responded Nick.

"She would certainly not have stopped while putting on her gloves to commit suicide?"

"You say gloves. There is but one glove," remarked Nick, dryly.

"Only one in sight. We shall find the other, I presume, if we make search."

"I doubt it."

"Why?"

"Because the glove she partly put on that hand is not her own."

"Not her own? Why, man, how do you know?"

"Because it is fully a size too small for her."

"But——"

"You would say she has it partly on. That is true, but if you examine it carefully you will see that the fingers would not even go in as far as the ends. The glove could not have been forced on her hands."

"Then whose is it?"

"I don't know," said Nick, who meanwhile had walked across the office and was examining a woman's light sack which hung from a hook on the wall. "It certainly didn't belong to her, for here is the pair she used."

He held up a pair of gloves of an entirely different color, and probably several sizes larger than that which was partially on the hand of the corpse.

"Well, by Jove!" muttered the coroner.

Nick had reached down again into the pocket in which he found the gloves. This time he fished out a lady's pocket-book. Without opening it, he carried it across the room and gently pulled the glove from the stiffening fingers of the dead girl.

Then he rolled the three gloves and the pocket-book up together, and put them all away in an inside pocket of his coat.

"With your permission, I'll take charge of these important articles of evidence," he said to the coroner.

The latter nodded assent, and asked:

"What is in the pocket-book?"

"We'll find out later when I've time to examine it. Now, we must get together our facts by questioning those people out there one at a time."

"A good idea."

"But, before we begin, I want to make a request."

"Name it."

"That you postpone the inquest from day to day till I have a chance to get to the very bottom of the mystery."

"Willingly, my boy, and meantime I'll not bother my brains about it, because I know what Nick Carter cannot fathom in a case like this will never be found out."

"Thank you. Now, we will call in and question our first witness."

"Who will it be? the elder of the two men—the one who must have been here first after the tragedy or when it occurred?"

"No, I think I'll first hear what the younger and more fashionably dressed one of the two has to tell. I'll call him in."

So saying, Nick went to the dividing door, opened it, and beckoned to the man who had preceded him up the stairs only a few seconds to the scene of the tragedy.

The young man entered the rear office, plainly laboring under great excitement. Nick closed and locked the door, invited his witness to take a seat, and lost no time in beginning his examination.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK KNEW.

"In order to get down to the facts in this case," began Nick, addressing the young man, "it will be necessary to apply for information to those who are supposed to be in possession of the knowledge we seek. We have, therefore, called you in first to set us on the way in our inquiry."

"I am ready to answer any question which it is in my power to do," responded the young man, trying hard to repress his nervousness.

"What is your name?"

"Oscar Gay."

"What is your business?"

"Confidential clerk."

"For whom?"

"Bridgely & Byke."

"Where are Messrs. Bridgely & Byke now?"

"Mr. Byke is in Europe—has been away about one month."

"And Bridgely?"

"Bridgely has been dead more than a year."

"Then Byke represents the firm as it existed before the death of the senior partner—he constitutes the firm?"

Gay hesitated and shuffled uneasily in his seat for a few moments before he replied:

"The firm name remains the same, but Mr. Byke has a partner."

"Who?"

"Victor Redway."

"The man I found in this room with you a while ago?"

"Yes."

"This Redway, do I understand you, took a place in the firm after Bridgely's death?"

"Yes, sir."

"And before that?"

"He was the confidential clerk of the firm."

"Then you succeeded in the place made vacant by him when he was admitted to partnership by Mr. Byke?"

"I did."

"Now, Mr. Gay, who was that dead girl—she was scarcely more than a girl."

"Her name was Estelle Langdon. She was the office stenographer and type-writer."

"Where did she live?"

"Somewhere up in Harlem."

"Was she married?"

Gay's eyes gave a quick flash toward Nick's face at this question—a fact the detective mentally noted without pretending to notice it. The answer came almost immediately.

"Not that anybody was aware of."

"Has she relatives?"

"None—I believe."

"How long have you known her?"

"About six months since she came here."

"What do you know about the way she died?"

"Nothing, except what I saw as I entered the office just before you came."

"Tell us what that was—what you saw."

"The body was lying there just as it is now. Mr. Redway was near by on the side next to the window. When I entered, his body was in a bent position, and one hand was extended toward the pistol on the floor."

"About to pick it up?"

"Either that, or had just laid it down."

Nick came to a dead halt in his queries at this answer, and sat for thirty seconds looking Gay straight in the face. The latter became plainly uncomfortable under the detective's glance.

"Did you ever see that pistol before?" inquired Nick, when he once more continued his examination.

"I did."

"To whom did it belong?"

"To Victor Redway."

"But the initials 'E. L.,' how do you account for them?"

"I can't account for them. They were on the pistol as long as I knew Redway to possess it."

"How long is that?"

"Several months."

"Did Redway carry this pistol regularly?"

"He never carried it."

"Then where did he keep it?"

"In the drawer of his desk over there."

Gay nodded to the flat-topped desk setting against the wall to the right of the open window, and almost directly behind the corpse.

"You are sure of that statement?"

"Yes, I have seen it there often."

"Didn't he keep the desk locked?"

"No. I never knew him to carry a key to the desk."

"Then Miss Langdon could have got the pistol herself had she chosen?"

"I suppose so."

"What was the relationship of Redway and Miss Langdon?"

"What do you mean?"

"Were they on friendly terms?"

"Oh, yes."

"Very confidential?"

"No, hardly that, I guess. Not in the presence of any one else, anyhow."

"Might they have been lovers?"

"If they were, no one knew it."

"Did they ever quarrel?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"They occupied this office together?"

"Yes."

"Where is your desk?"

"In that other private office," pointing to an adjoining room into which a door gave communication a little to the right of the desk on which the body lay, and separated from the office they were in by a heavy division wall. The door was closed, but a transom above the door stood wide open, as Nick was quick to note.

He lost no time in fixing in his mind the location of this room in its connection with the other two.

It formed the L to the suite, and had no direct communication with the large or general office. There were two doors only to this third room. One connected it with the room in which the body was found and the other opened into the hall.

Therefore, to get into that room, it was necessary to enter either directly from the hall or through both the other offices.

"This is Mr. Byke's private office, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"And you, as his confidential clerk, have your desk in there?"

"Only in his absence; when he is at home, I occupy a desk in the large office."

"Were you in there at your desk to-day?"

"Not since noon."

"You were absent since noon?"

"Yes, until I returned just in time to be 'in at the death.'"

There was a bad attempt to smile, as this was said, but the smile was painfully forced.

"Then you know nothing about the manner of the tragedy?"

"Nothing."

"You and Redway were exchanging hot words when I surprised you. What was it that passed between you?"

"I accused him of having killed Miss Langdon."

"And what reply did he make?"

"He was insolent. Asked me what I intended to do about it, and wanted to know what proofs I had to fortify my charges."

"And then?"

"You came almost before I could reply."

"And have you any proofs?"

"Nothing but suspicion."

"On what is that suspicion based?"

"Well, I've noticed that Miss Langdon has been growing fond of him for the last few months. She showed it frequently. I imagined that he at first received her preferences with pleasure, but that of late they had become annoying to him."

"That is the result of observation only?"

"That is all. I may be mistaken, too, you know."

"Has Redway a family?"

"Do you mean is he married?"

"Yes. Has he a wife, children, or relatives with whom he lives?"

"I believe not—not that any one knows of."

"Where does he live?"

"In bachelor apartments on Fifty-fifth street."

"That will do for the present, Mr. Gay."

The young man arose, and started to go into the other private room by way of the communicating door, but Nick stopped him.

"Not there, Mr. Gay. You will be so kind as to remain in the outer office until we have questioned the other parties."

Gay scowled, and went reluctantly back to the large office.

Nick gave the coroner a significant look, and remarked:

"He seems to be very anxious to get into that closed room, but he'll not do it till I've had a look in there first myself."

"What do you make of this Oscar Gay?" asked the coroner.

"Nothing—yet. We'll now see what Victor Redway has to say."

CHAPTER IV.

THE JUNIOR PARTNER'S STRANGE BEHAVIOR.

Victor Redway entered the room of death looking pale and worried. He cast a glance at the body of the dead girl, and a perceptible shudder shook his frame.

Nick lost no time in "doing business" with the junior member of the law firm.

"Your name is Victor Redway?" began Nick.

Redway nodded assent.

"The junior member of this law firm?"

"As Mr. Gay informed you, I presume."

There was a decided sneer in the reply.

"Mr. Gay has told us a number of things. How many of them were truth remains to be seen."

As Nick said this, he did not fail to notice that Redway seemed pleased with the latter part of the sentence.

"The two men are enemies, if not openly, then unavowed," thought Nick. To Redway he said:

"We have called you in here to get your version or story of the tragedy so far as you are willing to give it."

"Willing to give it? What do you mean?"

"Why, this: I am a detective; this is the coroner; you are a lawyer. This is not an inquest, nor yet a preliminary hearing; you are not under oath. There may be circumstances about the death of that girl which you do not desire to tell. Indeed, it might be to your interest not to talk of it at all."

Redway looked at Nick long and steadily. At last he said:

"I think I understand you. You believe I killed her?"

"I have no belief one way or the other.

It is my business to prove, to know, not to believe."

"But I am suspected?"

"The law will undoubtedly look to you to make a satisfactory explanation of your knowledge of the crime, or your ignorance of it."

"Well, suppose you ask me your questions."

"You will answer?"

"Some of them, perhaps. As a lawyer, I may choose to remain silent on some points—for the present, at least."

"Then I'll begin at the beginning. Mr. Redway, did you kill that girl?"

The answer came without hesitation, and accompanied by the faintest touch of a smile.

"I certainly did not."

"Do you know who did?"

The answer to this question was not given so spontaneously, and the smile gave way just an instant to the shadow of a frown. After only a moment of hesitation, Redway replied:

"No, I do not."

"Do you believe she committed suicide?"

"My belief on that score is not of any value."

"Do you know whether she had any cause to kill herself?"

"No."

"Did you ever hear her threaten to kill herself?"

"Not directly."

"Will you explain?"

"Well, she once dropped the remark that if she ever married, and her husband deserted her for another woman she would, she believed, kill herself."

"Ah!"

"But she would first kill the man who deceived her and the woman who robbed her of her rights?"

"Oh! What called forth this declaration?"

"The story of a client who had suffered somewhat in the same manner."

"How did she hear the story?"

"I told it to her."

"She was not married?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Had she a lover?"

"How should I know."

"Were you and she not on confidential terms?"

"Why should we be?"

"You two were in here together a great deal."

"True, as man and employee. I am not one to become confidential with an office attache."

"Not even with a pretty woman?"

"Especially not with a woman of any kind."

There was a hard, bitter ring to these words, which Nick did not fail to make a note of.

"Yet you told her the story of that deceived client."

"There was a reason for that."

"What reason?"

Redway frowned again, and answered:

"That is something I refuse to say."

"You were not her lover, Mr. Redway?"

An angry flush mounted the young lawyer's brow, and he replied:

"The question is not worthy of an answer."

"You are sure you never gave her cause to believe you thought more of her than any other young woman?"

"I don't pretend to know what is in any woman's mind."

"But your treatment of her——"

"Was of a business kind entirely."

"Well, we'll leave that part of the subject and come down to the tragedy. Were you in the room when the fatal shot was fired?"

"Why, no, certainly not."

"Where were you?"

"On the street."

"Was there any one in the office at the time?"

"I don't know."

"When you came in you found her lying there on that desk dead?"

Nick once more noticed just the mote of a hesitation in the reply.

"Yes, she was sitting there in that chair stone dead."

"How long had you been out of the office?"

"Ten or fifteen minutes—maybe longer."

"Where had you gone?"

"To the street."

"To any particular place?"

"Yes."

"You had an object in leaving the office for the street?"

"Perhaps."

"But had you not?"

"Oh, yes. There usually is an object in all we do."

"Well, what was your object in this instance?"

"I think I will not answer that question."

"Very well. When you went out, what was Miss Langdon doing?"

"Putting her desk in order."

"Preparatory to leaving?"

"I supposed so."

"Was it her time to go home?"

"It was past the time."

"What had detained her?"

"I don't know. A woman's whim, perhaps."

"Did you say anything to her as you went out?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"She asked me: 'Are you going, Mr. Redway,' and I replied: 'Yes.'"

"She meant to ask whether you were leaving for the day?"

"I suppose so."

"And you deceived her?"

"No. I had no intention then of coming back."

"What changed your mind?"

"A mere whim. I couldn't answer you intelligently on that point."

"You mean you will not," thought Nick.

"When you came in you found her dead?" Nick continued.

"Yes, I said so before."

"Any one else in the office?"

"No."

"You gave no immediate alarm?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because I realized from the first that it was an awkward fix for me to be in, any way I could manage it."

"So you remained?"

"Yes."

"What did you do here alone with the corpse?"

Redway's gray eyes once more turned sharply on Nick's face before he made reply.

"I spent a few minutes trying to find some trace of the crime, and at the same time figuring upon my own danger."

"So you waited for some one to come in?"

"I waited till some one did come in."

"Who was it?"

"Jack Marston—the office boy."

"How long after you returned was it till Jack Marston appeared?"

"I don't know. A man under such circumstances hasn't much knowledge of time."

"Did you send him to summon the police?"

"I made him understand that Miss Langdon had been killed, and—well, he did the rest without waiting for directions."

Again that faint smile twitched the corners of Redway's stern mouth.

"And while he was gone Gay came in?"

"Yes."

"When he entered the door where were you?"

"At the side of the corpse."

"What were you doing?"

"I had just stooped to pick up the pistol."

"Oh! But you didn't pick it up?"

"Why, no! In my personal contact with Gay I forgot it."

Nick gave a quiet chuckle in his innermost soul at so neatly trapping a lawyer.

"Whose pistol was it, Mr. Redway?"

"Mine."

"Where was it when you saw it last before you saw it on the floor near the dead girl?"

"In the drawer of my desk over there."

"When was that?"

"This morning."

"Was it loaded?"

"Yes."

"Every chamber?"

"I remember distinctly filling the chambers with cartridges yesterday, and I have not fired one of them since."

Nick noted the evasive answer.

"Were you in the habit of keeping it loaded?"

"No. On the contrary, I seldom had a cartridge in it. Yesterday I bought some and filled the chambers."

"What for?"

"I intended it for the benefit of a cat which spends the midnight keeping people awake."

"Another evasive answer," mentally noted Nick.

"Well?"

"Well, I went away without taking it with me. Hence it lay there all day loaded."

"Did Miss Langdon know the pistol was in that drawer?"

"I suppose she did. The drawer was never locked, and she frequently went there to get things out of it."

"That is all I have to ask you at present, Mr. Redway. Will you have the kindness to

remain in the outer office till we have a talk with the office boy?"

"I have no choice but to oblige you," came the sarcastic reply, and the junior partner left the room.

The coroner looked at Nick with a puzzled expression on his face.

"What do you make of Mr. Redway?" he asked.

"Nothing yet, but there is a good deal more to learn which may place Mr. Redway in an entirely different light. Now for Jack Marston. I depend on the boy for information which may be most valuable."

CHAPTER V.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY CALLER.

Jack Marston labored under extreme terror in the presence of the dead girl—so much so that Nick spent five minutes getting the lad's mind in condition to answer questions coherently. Then he began on the lad cautiously.

"How long have you been office boy for Bridgely & Byke, Jack?" asked the detective.

"Nearly two years."

"What are your hours?"

"I get here at eight o'clock, and this time of year go home generally at five."

"The office is closed up at that time?"

"The janitor generally takes it to clean up. Sometimes he don't get in till later."

"Do you lock up when you go away?"

"No, the janitor does that."

"Who leaves the first generally?"

"Mr. Byke, when he's here."

"And when he's not here?"

"Why, Mr. Gay. Mr. Gay has been out a good deal since Mr. Byke went to Europe. He went away to-day about eleven o'clock, and told me he wasn't coming back, but he did come, late as it was."

"Are you always the last to leave?"

"No, sir! Sometimes Mr. Redway stays here later than five, but he never keeps me."

"And Miss Langdon?"

"She always left when I did—at five o'clock. The elevator stops running then."

"But she didn't leave at five to-day?"

"I gness not, sir."

"How does it come you returned to-day after your hour for going home?"

"Mr. Redway sent me on an errand."

"What kind of an errand?"

"To take his watch to a jeweler's on Broadway to be cleaned."

"What time was that?"

"Ten minutes before five."

"And told you to come back?"

"No, sir; he said I needn't come back. But the jeweler's place was closed on account of a death in the family and I came back with the watch."

"Did you give him the watch?"

"No, sir, I forgot it. I was so scared."

"Where is it?"

"In my pocket."

"Let me see it."

The boy handed to Nick a magnificent gold hunting case watch. Merely glancing at it, Nick said:

"I'll return this to Mr. Redway. You needn't tell him that the jeweler's place was closed."

"But——"

"No buts about it, lad. I am Nick Carter, and represent Superintendent Byrnes, and this is the coroner. You do what I tell you and no harm shall come to you."

Nick saw he was dealing with a naturally bright, quick-witted and honest lad.

"Now, then, Jack, tell me. Who was here in these offices when you left to take Mr. Redway's watch to the jeweler's?"

"Nobody, except him and Miss Langdon."

"That was ten minutes before five."

"Yes, sir."

"You are sure that he didn't follow you to the street?"

"Not that I saw. He had just come in from the street about ten minutes before."

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir, he went out with a lady, and was gone nearly half an hour."

"Who was she?"

"I don't know. I never saw her before."

"What kind of looking lady was she?"

"Young and very handsome."

"Whom did she ask for when she came?"

"For Mr. Redway."

"Did she not give a name?"

"No, sir. I asked her for her name. But she replied with a question, 'Is he in there?' Then she walked back, opened the door, came in here and shut it."

"Before the door closed I heard Mr. Redway say, 'What—you here?'"

"Where was Miss Langdon?"

"Out at lunch."

"What time was that?"

"When the lady came?"

"Yes."

"About half-past two o'clock."

"And how long did she stay?"

"Till a quarter past four."

"Was in there all that time with Mr. Redway?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did no one disturb them?"

"No, sir. Mr. Redway gave me orders soon after the lady went in that he was not to be disturbed by anybody. So I sent several parties away."

"But Miss Langdon?"

"She came back about a quarter of three and sat out there in the big office with me till the lady went away."

"Didn't she appear to be curious about the strange visitor?"

"Not one bit till the lady went out and she saw her. Then she got somewhat excited."

"She saw the woman as the latter went out?"

"Yes, sir. Miss Langdon was in the big office as Mr. Redway and the lady went through on their way to the elevator. Mr. Redway said to me as he passed, 'I'll be back soon, Jack,' and accompanied the lady downstairs."

"I don't believe either of them saw Miss Langdon, who was sitting in the corner, sort of behind the door."

"And you say the sight of the strange woman excited her?"

"Very much. As soon as they were on the elevator she began asking questions about the woman, and seemed to be very much worked up, though up to that time she scarcely seemed to give the lady visitor a thought."

"Was Miss Langdon inclined to grow excited?"

"No, sir. On the contrary, she was nearly always quiet and easy-going."

"What did she do till Mr. Redway returned?"

"Walked around in that office there nervously, and seemed as if she couldn't wait till he got back."

"Well, when he came back—what then?"

"He went right back to the office, and left the door open behind him. Miss Langdon shut it herself."

"Ah! that is interesting. Go on."

"I didn't hear much that was said, though I might had I cared to listen, for Miss Langdon's voice was raised to a high pitch."

"Did you hear anything?"

"Yes. I couldn't help it. She almost shrieked the words."

"What words?"

"Why, these: 'If I was sure of it, her life wouldn't be worth a penny.'"

"Were they still quarreling when you were sent out with Mr. Redway's watch?"

"No, sir. At least, she seemed to have cooled off considerable."

"When you came in what was Mr. Redway doing?"

"Washing his hands in that stationary basin over there," said Jack, pointing to a lavatory behind a screen in one corner of the office.

"What did he say?"

"He seemed very much surprised and somewhat confused. I saw Miss Langdon lying on the desk that way, and, remembering the scene between them, I asked:

"Why, Mr. Redway, what ails her?"

"He said: 'Jack, she has met with an awful accident.'

"Then I went up, and as soon as I saw she was dead I ran as fast as I could downstairs and met Mr. Gay coming up."

"Did you ever see this pistol, Jack?"

"Yes, sir, often."

"Where?"

"In Mr. Redway's desk over there."

"When did you see it last?"

"Yesterday."

"Where?"

"In Miss Langdon's hands."

"What was she doing with it?"

"Loading it."

"What for?"

"She said Mr. Redway had loaned it to her to shoot a cat."

Nick's mind instantly reverted to Redway's evasive words about shooting cats.

"But she didn't use it, I guess?" ventured Nick.

"I don't know, but I reckon she tried it."

"Why?"

"The pistol was not there last night after she went away."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure. I went to the drawer for some blanks, and the pistol was gone, though the box of cartridges was still there."

"Did you see the pistol this evening?"

"I haven't seen it since till now."

"It was on the floor, almost at the touch of Miss Langdon's hand."

"The one which hung down—had the glove on?"

"Yes."

"You are mistaken, sir."

"What do you mean?"

"I noticed the hand with the glove on when I went to look at her. There was no pistol near it."

"You may not have noticed it."

"I would have seen it if it had been there," insisted Jack.

With a caution to the lad to keep his lips for a day or two Nick dismissed him.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE STRANGE WOMAN SAW FROM
ACROSS THE STREET.

The janitor was the next person called and questioned.

"You take charge of the offices every evening to clean them out and lock them up, do you not?" asked Nick.

"I do, sir."

"What time do you generally begin that work?"

"Usually right after five o'clock, when Mr. Redway leaves."

"But you did not come to these offices at five o'clock to-day, nor yet as early as half-past five?"

"True, sir. I had been asked to wait till six o'clock."

"Asked to wait till six? By whom?"

"By Miss Langdon, God rest her soul!"

"Did she say why she wanted you to wait?"

"She said she would be busy till that time."

Nick's mind instantly reverted to the type-written message which had summoned him to the place of the tragedy.

"Besides sir," continued the janitor, "Mr. Redway did not leave at five o'clock as usual."

"How do you know that?"

"I saw him go downstairs five minutes after the elevator stopped, and it stopped at five o'clock."

"This is important information. Did you see him come up again?"

"No, sir; but somebody came up about five minutes after he went down, for I heard the man's steps. I was busy in an office two floors below, however, and didn't look out to see who it was."

"Were there any other persons in the building at that time?"

"Only the three persons out there in that room. They occupy offices two flights above, and are here every day till six o'clock."

"Did you hear a pistol shot?"

"No, sir, I did not."

"Isn't that strange?"

"It does seem so, sir."

"Was there any unusual noise about the time the shot may have been fired?"

"Only once, sir."

"What was the noise?"

"A wagon loaded with bar iron passed on the street below and made a great clatter."

"About what time was that?"

"Near five o'clock."

"Before or after Redway went down stairs?"

"Just before, if I remember rightly."

Mr. Kennedy, Mr. Grote and Miss Lucas were then called in together and questioned concerning what they knew of the affair.

Neither had any knowledge which at first could throw light on the subject in hand.

They had been at work in their offices, two floors above, and neither heard a pistol shot.

"Do any of you remember the noise of a heavily loaded wagon which passed through the street below about five o'clock?" inquired Nick.

Mr. Grote remembered it distinctly, and for a good reason.

When questioned for the reason, he replied

that at the time Miss Lucas was standing at the window looking down the street. He had called to her, and the din was so great he was compelled to raise the pitch of his voice and call three times before she heard him.

Miss Lucas then remembered the circumstance, but was not aware of any unusual noise at the time. There might have been such a noise, however, but her attention was wholly engrossed just then by something else.

"What was it that interested you so much?" asked Nick. "Something you saw in the street?"

"No, something I saw in a window across the street."

"What did you see?"

"A woman."

"Why did the woman prove so interesting?"

"Because from her actions I thought she was watching something which was going on in this building."

"Ah! now we are getting at something important. What made you believe she was watching this building?"

"Because when she first came to that window she looked out boldly, fearlessly and carelessly; suddenly she drew back and hid her face behind the edge of the window, seemingly on the watch and anxious not to be noticed herself."

"Well?"

"She sat thus probably five minutes. Then, springing to her feet, she almost ran away from the window and disappeared."

"What window was it through which she looked?"

Miss Lucas pointed directly across the street and answered:

"That one."

She had designated the window which Nick had previously noticed to be on a line with the open window of Redway's private office and the desk of the dead girl.

Miss Lucas supplemented her information by saying:

"Our offices are directly above these, and I was looking down at the woman—or rather at the place from which she had disappeared a minute before when Mr. Grote called me."

"Could you see the woman's features?"

"Distinctly when she first came to the window."

"Had you ever seen her before?"

"Only once."

"When?"

"To-day—this afternoon as I was going out to lunch."

"Where was she?"

"She got into the elevator as I got out."

"What time was that?"

"About half-past two o'clock."

Nick had no doubt that the woman at the window was Redway's mysterious visitor.

Mr. Kennedy and Miss Lucas were dismissed with a caution to repeat none of their information to any one else.

Nick requested Mr. Grote to remain a few minutes.

After Kennedy and the typewriter had gone back to the private office Nick whispered to the coroner:

"Make a pretense of trying to get some further information from Grote, just to keep up the hum of conversation, while I take a look in the private office of Mr. Byke."

So, while the coroner engaged Mr. Grote in further conversation, Nick silently used his pick-lock, entered the private office of Mr. Byke and remained for nearly ten minutes.

When he returned to Redway's office he locked the communicating door behind him, and then said:

"Mr. Grote, as a representative of Superintendent Byrnes, I ask you to mention to no one the fact that you saw me enter that room just now. It may be of great concern to innocent parties who are in danger at this time

that my visit to Mr. Byke's office shall not be known to any one save our three selves for the present."

"You can rely on me, sir, to be mum on the subject."

"Thank you, and that is all."

Nick himself accompanied Mr. Grote to the large office, and, addressing the two policemen, said:

"Mr. McCarthy, all these good people, except Mr. Redway, of whom we wish to ask a few more questions, may go. Mr. Brown, you will see that they have free access to their offices or the street."

Then, turning to Redway, the detective said:

"I would like to get a little more information from you, Mr. Redway. Will you be so kind as to step back into your office with me once more?"

"Nobody could refuse a gentleman so polite as you," was the sarcastic reply.

Once inside, and the door locked, Nick proceeded without delay to his task.

"Mr. Redway, you told me that you had been on the street, and when you came back you found Miss Langdon dead."

"You have stated the case correctly, sir."

"What time was it when you left Miss Langdon here alive and went down to the street?"

"I cannot give you the exact time."

"Was it before or after five?"

"Before."

"How do you know?"

"Because I rode down in the elevator, and the elevator boy never makes a trip after five o'clock."

"You are sure you rode down in the elevator?"

"Why, certainly I am."

"Do you know where the elevator boy lives?"

"No, but the janitor can tell you. He has his address."

The response was so feebly made that Nick was somewhat puzzled.

"Where was your office boy when you went out?"

"I had just sent him to the jeweler's with my watch."

"How long before?"

"Only a few minutes."

"How long did you remain on the street?"

"Ten or fifteen minutes, probably."

"Why did you come up, go down and return the second time?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you say you rode down in the elevator a little before five and came back ten or fifteen minutes later. Why did you go down almost directly afterward and return the second time?"

"I did not."

"But the janitor saw you going down the stairs about a quarter past five."

"I beg the janitor's pardon, but he saw nothing of the kind."

"You deny, then, that you walked downstairs about that time?"

"Most emphatically. I have not walked downstairs in this building to-day."

"When you were coming up did you have occasion to retrace your steps for a short distance?"

"No, sir."

"You came straight up without turning back once?"

"Yes."

"Is the janitor a truthful man?"

"So far as I know, he is."

"If he declares, then, that he saw you go down the stairs at ten or fifteen minutes after five, or at any time after five o'clock, what would you say?"

"That he either lied or was mistaken."

"Now, Mr. Redway, you refused to tell me why you went to the street on that last trip

down and where you were. Do you still refuse to answer?"

"I do."

"A lady visited you in this office this afternoon."

Redway's face flushed and then grew pale. A cold, desperate gleam came into his gray eyes and his lips closed tightly.

"Do you deny that, too?" asked Nick, after Redway showed no intention of replying to the statement of fact.

"I do not."

"Who was she?"

"That I refuse to tell."

"And the nature of her business here?"

"Is my affair solely—and hers."

"Are you sure it was not also Miss Langdon's affair?"

"Quite sure."

"After she went away you and Miss Langdon had a quarrel?"

"No, sir, we had not."

"But Miss Langdon's voice was heard in a highly pitched and exciting key talking to you in here?"

"Miss Langdon was mistress of her own voice. I repeat, we had no quarrel."

"What was she saying to you while she was so excited?"

"I surely cannot tell you."

"Why?"

"It concerned only herself, and she is dead. Her affairs are sacred so far as I am concerned."

"You left the building with your lady visitor?"

"Yes."

"Where did you take her?"

"To the elevated railroad station."

"Where does she live?"

"You will have to get that information from her."

"Have you seen the lady since you left her at the elevated railroad station?"

"Mr. Carter, there is no use in your asking me any further questions or of my answering any more."

"Then I presume, Mr. Redway, you are lawyer enough to understand your position," remarked Nick.

"Oh, yes! I must submit to arrest on suspicion. But I have no fears. There is nothing in the case to fix the crime on me."

"Do you know how Miss Langdon died?"

"I believe you asked me that question before, and I answered it. I do not."

"Then, till we find out, you will have to submit to detention."

"Imprisoned, you mean. Well, I am ready."

Nick, accompanied by Officer Brown, took Redway to the nearest police justice, where a commitment was sworn out, and Redway was lodged in the Tombs.

Before he left the Borden Building, however, Nick questioned the janitor again about the person who went down the stairs shortly after five o'clock.

"Are you positive it was Mr. Redway?"

"Sure as I live I am."

"No mistaking some one else for him?"

"How could I? There's no one else wears such a sky-blue suit, such a straw hat with a black band or has such a long blonde mustache."

When Nick heard this answer, calling up Redway's peculiar dress and appearance, he couldn't doubt the janitor's word. Then he got the address of the elevator boy, and turned the case over to the coroner with this personal request:

"Postpone your inquest from day to day, until I have had a little more time to look into this affair."

Redway once safely in the Tombs, Nick went straight to the home of the elevator boy. He found the lad at supper, and knew the news of the tragedy in the Borden Building could not yet have reached him.

"I am trying to find Mr. Redway," explained Nick, "and I thought you might tell me where he is."

"Why, he has rooms somewhere on Fifty-fifth street, I believe. Did you look in the directory?"

"Yes! He isn't there. Was he in the office to-day?"

"Sure!"

"You saw him?"

"Why, yes, several times. He rode up and down with me."

"How many times?"

"Oh, four or five, maybe!"

"Was any one with him on any of the trips?"

"There was a stunning-looking young lady with him once when he went down."

"Was that the last time he went down?"

"No, he came back half an hour later and went down with me on my last trip at just five o'clock."

This information confirmed Redway's statement, and was a puzzler for Nick. He had reason now to know that if the janitor was correct in his testimony Redway must have come up almost immediately by the stairs, gone down the second time by the same way and returned a second time by the stairs.

The case had a very puzzling complexion at this particular place.

"When did you see Mr. Gay last?" asked Nick.

"Mr. Gay left the office about eleven o'clock and didn't come back any more."

"Did anybody inquire of you during the day for the offices of Bridgely & Byke?"

Nick expected the boy to say that the strange lady did. The reply was rather disappointing.

"Only one old fellow—an old man who rode up about half-past two or three o'clock."

How long did he stay?"

"I don't know. He didn't go down with me. Guess he must have walked."

"Half-past two or three o'clock," said Nick to himself. "The office boy told me that several parties came in while the strange woman was closeted with Redway and that he sent them all away. This old man was one of them, I suppose."

Then, for the time being, Nick dismissed all thoughts of the old man from his mind. But the existence of that personage was destined soon to be recollected with startling force.

CHAPTER VI.

NICK AND CHICK IN CONFERENCE.

The great detective's next move was to go straight home and summon his right-hand man, Chick, for a conference.

Without a waste of words or time he put his assistant in possession of all the facts of the case up to that minute.

When he finally ended the details with an account of his visit to the elevator boy he threw himself back in his chair and gave Chick a look which meant:

"That is all. What do you think of it?"

The latter returned his chief's stare for a full minute; then he uttered the single word:

"Well?"

Nick echoed the monosyllable:

"Well?"

"I guess you have a pretty deep case on your hands," smiled Chick. "But I'll wager my watch against your toothpick on one point."

"Which is?"

"That though you've locked Redway up in the Tombs you don't believe he killed the girl."

"You would win the toothpick if I took your bet. Still, I might be mistaken."

"I don't believe you are, and I shouldn't be surprised if you had some testimony back

of all that which you have revealed which puts this Redway in a better light than ever."

"Chick, you are a good pupil; I'm proud of you."

"Thanks. I will go further, and say that I believe you think Redway knows who killed the girl, or how she died, and that he is shielding somebody."

"You must have learned mind-reading with your other accomplishments," smiled Nick. "Maybe you can tell me who it is that he is trying to shield?"

"Not unless it be the strange woman."

"Humph! We must find that woman and learn more about her," was the non-committal reply. "Chick, there is another character I want watched, and you're the very one to do it."

"Who?"

"The confidential clerk—Gay."

"Oh, ho!"

"I don't like him. Besides, there is a mystery about him."

"Well?"

"He was absent from the building most of the day, but he managed to be in at the death."

"Did you ask him what had brought him back at that particular time?"

"No."

"Why?"

"It would have told him that he was under suspicion. Best to have him off his guard."

"You have other evidence to involve him?"

"Yes."

"I thought so. What is it?"

"I told you about my quick, hurried secret visit to the office of the senior member of the firm?"

"Yes. What did you discover in there?"

"Not much, and yet a good deal. There was a mirror so fixed near the ceiling that a person standing or sitting near the connecting door could see reflected everything which

went on in the other room where the tragedy occurred."

"And, as the transom above the door was open, could hear as well?"

"Yes."

"I see. That office was supposed to be deserted all the afternoon?"

"Correct."

"Yet some one was concealed in there, and heard and saw all that was said and done in Redway's office?"

"I believe so. Whoever it was, he or she made a mistake."

"By forgetting to remove the mirror?"

"Exactly. And unless I am much mistaken that mirror will trap the person we want."

"How?"

"If it disappears from its place high up there on the wall before to-morrow—and I think it will."

"I see, I see. You have arranged to find out who goes into that office?"

"Yes. The janitor will keep me posted."

"Can you trust him?"

"I think so."

"But how about his seeing Redway go downstairs at the time he says he did?"

"I believe he saw some one go down at that time."

"Who? Redway?"

"That I am not ready to answer. It is one of the knotty places in the mystery."

"Nick, who wrote that note to you?"

"I have no doubt it was the girl who was killed."

"What was her object?"

"She had serious work for a detective, or she would not have sent for me. The girl wrote another note on her typewriter to-day besides the one sent to me."

"To whom?"

"I don't know; it is not addressed. I'll show it to you."

Nick produced the dead girl's pocketbook,

from which he took a typewritten slip, on which was this message:

"You failed to keep your engagement last night. I'll give you just one more chance. Meet me to-night at the same place, 8:30 sharp, and be ready to come to some definite understanding with me. If you fail me this time I will consider myself absolved from my oath."

"Nick, this is the key to the whole tragedy."

"I think so, too."

"The note was never delivered."

"Certainly not."

"Why?"

"For want of an opportunity—that's clear."

"She may have backed down after writing it."

"You believe the note was intended for Gay, and that he gave her the slip to-day because she had a chance to get it to him?"

"Right you are, lad."

"Did he go away from the office suddenly, without telling any one?"

"Yes, except the office boy, whom he told just as he went out, leaving word for Redway that he would not be back during the day. Of course, Miss Langdon got the message indirectly."

"Well, what else?"

"This."

Nick produced Redway's watch and opened the back of the case. When he turned the inside toward Chick the latter looked upon the portrait of a lovely little girl of six or seven years of age.

"Who is she?" asked Nick, as he gazed admiringly at the beautiful face.

"That we must find out."

"Does she look like Redway?"

"No. She has none of his features that can see. Yet I believe it will be found that the child plays a prominent part in the tragedy by some indirect method."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because there is a slight resemblance between her face and the face of the girl who was killed."

"Ah! that makes the child an important character in the case. What is your next move, Nick?"

"There is no next move. It must be a series of moves in which I need your help and the aid of Ida."

"Well, map out your business."

"First, I want to find the mysterious woman."

"Secondly, I want to find that little girl."

"Thirdly, I want to discover where Estelle Langdon went last night—in order to discover her place of meeting with the party to whom she addressed that note."

"Fourthly, I want Gay shadowed."

"Well, which part of the job is mine?"

"I'm going to turn Gay over to you."

"All right. Gay's my meat."

"I'll look up the handsome, mysterious woman myself."

"And Ida?"

"I'll send Ida to the home of the dead girl to get information there."

"Perhaps you can give me an idea where I'll find Gay?"

"I think I can. Go down to the Borden Building, and wait till he comes there."

"To-night?"

"Certainly! He'll wait till some of the excitement dies out in that vicinity. Then he'll visit that private office, or I am greatly mistaken."

Ida was brought into the case at this stage and instructed in the part she was expected to play.

CHAPTER VII.

NICK BEGINS TO SOLVE THE RIDDLE.

Having partaken of a hasty supper, and having changed his disguise, Nick went

downtown again to the neighborhood of the tragedy.

He did not go to the Borden Building this time, but to that one across the street, in which was the office out of whose window he was convinced the strange woman had seen the tragedy as it occurred in the office of Bridgely & Byke.

The building was locked up for the night, but Nick had no trouble in finding the janitor, who lived in one of the upper rooms, but who at that hour was on the street discussing with his acquaintances the tragedy of the Borden Building.

Oh, yes! He—the janitor—knew whose offices were exactly opposite Bridgely & Byke's—they belonged to Lawyer John Woodford.

With Lawyer John Woodford's address in his possession, obtained from the directory, Nick started uptown in search of him.

He found the lawyer at home, and was pleasantly received.

Nick inquired about a lady, whom he believed had been in Mr. Woodford's office that afternoon about five o'clock, but of whom he had lost all trace soon after.

Yes, Mr. Woodford admitted that a woman had called to see him about that hour. He was out at the time, and his office boy asked her to sit down and wait.

She did wait for a little while, when, without saying a word, she passed hastily out of the office, almost running as she went.

He had come in a few minutes later when the boy related the circumstance to him.

He had no means of knowing whether he had ever seen the lady or not, or of knowing who she was. She left no name; indeed, left nothing to identify her but a glove.

Here the lawyer pulled a lady's kid glove from his pocket and held it up before Nick's eyes.

"She left this behind in her unceremonious departure," the lawyer said.

Nick recognized it at once as the mate to the glove which was found partly on the hand of the dead girl.

With some reluctance, and apparent misgivings as to the policy, Lawyer Woodford permitted Nick to take the glove away with him.

As the detective was about to leave, Woodford seemed to recollect something, and said:

"Oh, by the way, perhaps I know who can tell you more about that lady!"

"Indeed?"

"Yes. My boy told me that she had scarcely disappeared down the stairs—she didn't wait for the elevator—when Mr. Redway, of the firm of Bridgely & Byke, stepped off the elevator, and inquired for the lady. He seemed much disappointed when told she was gone."

This was intensely interesting news to Nick.

"Did Redway follow her?" inquired Nick.

"Why, no. The stupid boy did not tell him she walked or ran downstairs, else he might have followed her. Do you know, I think she was trying to avoid Redway. I'd advise you to see Redway."

Again Nick examined the directory. This time he looked for the name "Oscar Gay," but didn't find it. The name was not in the New York Directory for the current year.

He then turned to the Brooklyn Directory, and found the name, with the address, on Brooklyn Heights.

It didn't take him long to go over to the place, which he found was a middle-class boarding-house.

The landlady informed him that Gay had not been a boarder with her for ten months.

He went to New York somewhere, but she never learned exactly where.

"Was there any reason for his leaving?" asked the detective.

"None that I'm sure of. There was a young lady boarding here at the same time and we thought they were rather sweet on each other. She left, too, a few days after him, and I haven't heard a word of either since."

"What was the young woman's name?"

"Let's see: she was a typewriter, and her name was — was — was Langdon — Estel Langdon."

Though Nick had not discovered Gay's address by his trip to Brooklyn, he had obtained information that was almost equally as valuable, and he went back to New York very much elated.

He returned to his house to meet with surprise, which was almost dumfounding.

As he entered, his servant said a lady was waiting to see him in the library.

He proceeded straightway to receive his visitor.

She sat in the gloom as Nick entered, and it was not till he had turned up the light that the surprise came.

Even then it required ten or fifteen seconds for him to arrive at his startling discovery.

The moment his eyes fell upon the face of the woman before him a conviction forced itself upon him that he had seen her before.

Then came the more forcible conviction that it was a striking resemblance and no recollection of features.

Her face had almost a counterpart in a younger, smaller countenance on which she had recently looked.

It was a twin picture to the portrait of a child in the back of Redway's watch—the face of the woman before him.

Instantly Nick knew that he was in the presence of Redway's mysterious visitor of the afternoon.

What good luck had sent her to him?

"You have been waiting to see me?" said Nick, inquiringly.

"If you are the detective, Nick Carter, I have," was her reply, as she looked intently into his face.

"Well, I am Nick Carter, at your service."

"I have heard of your great professional skill, sir, and have come to seek your help in a case that to me has recently become more than a matter of life and death. I am rich, and can pay you well for your services."

"What is the nature of these services?"

"To find my child."

"I thought so," was Nick's mental response.

"Boy or girl?" he asked.

"A girl."

"How old?"

"Nearly seven years old."

"Are you a widow?"

"No, sir," with a flush. "My husband is live."

"But you don't live with him?"

"I do not. We have not lived together for five years."

"And he has your child hidden away?"

"Yes."

"What is your name?"

"Evelyn Lock."

"Have you a picture of the little girl?"

"No, sir. I haven't seen her since she was less than two years old."

The tears came into her eyes, and a sob broke from her lips as she said it.

"Why have you not searched for the child before?"

"I have, but it was only within the last day or two that I have been able to locate her—abductor."

"Her father, you mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"You are not a resident of New York?"

"No. I am an Englishwoman. My home is Birmingham. The last five years I have searched the world over with no success, till, by accident, I found the child's father here in New York to-day."

"He knows you are here?"

"Yes," reluctantly.

"Is a reconciliation with him impossible?"

"It is—now."

Nick began to fear that he understood the meaning of that last word, "now."

"You say 'now.' Were you willing to be reconciled until recently?"

"Yes, I loved him dearly—never ceased to love him in spite of the fact that he robbed me of my child, for I know he was cruelly deceived about me, and had I been guilty of all which he had cause to believe me guilty of, I would have deserved to lose him, and my child, too."

"Why do you say that a reconciliation now is impossible?"

"I cannot tell you that."

"Is the cause on your side or his?"

"On his."

Nick concluded he would now force the situation.

"You say you do not know how your little girl looks now?"

"Yes, sir. Remember, I have not seen her for five years."

"Then I'll let you see what she looks like."

As Nick spoke he took Redway's watch from his pocket, opened the back of the case, and presented to the astonished young woman the portrait of the sweet face set therein.

At first she could only gaze at it in utter stupefaction.

Then, realizing what it meant, she gave a great cry, pressed the portrait to her lips again and again, and ended all by—woman-like—fainting.

Nick caught her just in time to save the watch from slipping from her grasp. His experience with fainting women was large and varied. The means of resuscitation were near at hand, and he soon had his fair visitor back to consciousness.

Her first question was:

"Where did you get it?"

"The watch?"

"Yes, yes!"

"Indirectly from its owner."

"From—from——"

"From Victor Redway. He is your husband, and the father of the missing child."

The woman bent her head in silent assent.

"Is Victor Redway his real name?"

"Part of it. The full name is Victor Redway Lock."

"Oh, yes—your married name. What is the little girl's name?"

"Estelle Langdon Lock."

It was one of those periods in Nick Carter's life when sudden surprise nearly struck him dumb.

What did it mean? This woman's little girl and the concealed child of Redway bearing the name of the girl who had so mysteriously met her death that afternoon.

As soon as Nick had time to pull his wits together, he inquired:

"After whom was the child named?"

"After my aunt—my mother's only sister."

"Where is she now?"

"She has been dead some six years. She died broken-hearted. Her life and mine were most wretchedly alike."

"How so?"

"Her husband deserted her, taking their only child, a girl, away with him."

"Where did they go?"

"I don't know. They disappeared, were never heard of again, and I suppose both are dead."

"Why did the girl go with the father and desert the mother?"

"She was her father's idol, and he hers. She took his side of the quarrel."

"What was her name?"

"Same as her mother—Estelle. But what has all this to do with my child?"

"More, much more, than you suspect, madame," replied Nick, firmly.

"In what way—explain?"

"Presently. You recognize the portrait of your child in that watch?"

"Oh, yes! May I keep the watch?"

"If you answer me truly two questions."

"Ask them."

Nick produced the glove which had been taken from the dead girl's hand, and held it up before her.

"Is this your glove?"

She turned pale, but answered firmly and promptly:

"It is. Where——"

"And this one, too?"

"Yes, sir; that, too. Where did you get them?"

"This one," designating the first one, "was found in the private office of Victor Redway this evening."

"This one," elevating the other glove, "was dropped in the law office of John Woodford just across the street from Redway's office."

The woman had turned deadly pale, and Nick thought once she would faint again. So he gave her time to rally, which she did quite bravely. Then he went on:

"When you dropped the last glove in Woodford's office you were sitting at his window watching a scene going on in Redway's office, just across the street."

"In that scene a girl in Redway's office was trying to get this other glove, the mate, of her left hand."

Nick paused long enough to make his speech the more dramatic.

"While she was thus engaged, and while you were watching her, somebody killed her—shot her—murdered her in cowardly, cold blood."

Mrs. Lock sat as if chiseled from stone. If she had the power of speech, she made

attempt to use it. So Nick concluded the dramatic situation.

"You do not know who that girl was, but I believe you do know who fired the shot which deprived her of life.

"Now, I am going to tell you who the victim was, and then I'll ask you to tell me who was the assassin.

"You did not recognize the girl, I suppose?"

A negative shake of the head was the only response.

"But you begin to suspect."

"Ah, my God!" came the response, in a whispering gasp.

"The girl whom you saw murdered was your cousin, Estelle Langdon. Now, who was it that fired the shot?"

The answer came almost as Nick expected.

For the second time Mrs. Lock lost consciousness. She had fainted again.

CHAPTER VIII.

A HUSBAND'S LOVE.

When Mrs. Lock had once more regained consciousness, Nick gave her a stimulant, and let her have plenty of time to come into full possession of her reasoning faculties before he pressed her further about what she had seen from Lawyer Woodford's window.

When he did resume the subject, it was by saying:

"Take time to think the situation over seriously, Mrs. Lock, and then give me your answer."

"I can give you your answer now," she replied, in a voice which was weak and trembling. "All the answer I have to give?"

"By telling me what you saw from Lawyer Woodford's window."

"I do not admit that I saw anything from Lawyer Woodford's window."

"But you saw something. You were there when the shot was fired which killed your

cousin. You are probably the only living witness who saw the deed done."

"Ah! And yet you expect me to admit it, and tell what I am supposed to have seen?"

"Yes."

"And why do you think I would do so, if it was as you suppose?"

"Not if it was as I suppose, but as I know. I'll tell you why I not only think but feel sure you'll conceal nothing from me."

"Well?"

"Because you'll do anything to save your husband."

"To *save* him?"

The emphasis which she put on the word "save" was a full confession to the astute detective. She realized it almost as soon as the three words were uttered.

But Nick's next sentence somewhat relieved her mind, as well as mystified her.

"You think you saw him kill Estelle Langdon?"

"I *think* I saw him. Why——"

Again an accented word had made a confession, and she once more halted in confusion.

"I am anxious to get at the bottom of a conspiracy of some kind, and I can do it by having the benefit of your statement of just what happened in that room as you saw it from across the street."

"Mr. Carter, you say this to trap me."

"As Heaven is my judge, Mrs. Lock, I do not."

"You believe my husband is innocent of that crime?"

"I am sure of it, but circumstances are against him now."

"They say, Mr. Carter, that you are the soul of honor."

"If I have that reputation it is earned, and you may rely on it that I will not sacrifice it at your expense, Mrs. Lock."

"It seems almost inexplicable to me, but something prompts me to trust you."

"I do not believe you will ever regret it, if you do."

"I'll do it," with a great sigh, as if of relief. "Yet the first statement I make must seem like sending the man I love to his death."

"You believe you saw your husband fire the shot that killed Estelle Langdon?"

"Yes."

"There was nothing to obstruct your view?"

"No—nothing."

"You were seen to draw back from the window and partly conceal yourself. Why did you do that?"

"Because I supposed I had been seen by Victor, and it was what I wanted to avoid."

"Ah, ha! Now, we are getting onto interesting ground. You did not go to Woodford's office, then, for the purpose of spying upon your husband?"

"Surely not. I did not know Woodford's window commanded a view of Victor's office until I saw him come into the room where the girl sat."

"Why did you go to Woodford's?"

"To ask his advice and aid."

"In what?"

"In an attempt at reconciliation with my husband, or to gain possession of my little girl. I thought I had made some progress in my interview with Victor, and I sorely needed advice."

"How did it happen you went to Woodford?"

"I met him at Newport. When he heard I was practically friendless in America, he gave me his office card and gallantly offered to assist me, if I ever needed his aid. I had the card with me, and went to the address."

"Redway says he saw you as far as the elevated station?"

"So he did, but I left the station without taking the train and went to hunt up Mr. Woodford."

"Had you no other friend to whom you could go for advice and aid—one you knew better?"

"One I knew better? Yes. But not of whom I thought I could trust, especially in this particular case."

"Why not in this particular case?"

Mrs. Lock showed a little confusion, which she frankly replied:

"Because the gentleman to whom I had become somewhat attached in a friendly way and to whom I gave my confidence, has lately shown a disposition too much like that of a lover; indeed, he has gone to such an extent as to propose divorce and then marriage."

"That is quite interesting."

"He has even tempted me with the promise to find and restore to me my child, if I would reward him by eloping with him to some European country."

Nick was becoming intensely interested.

"Of course I could not go to him for advice or aid in the case as you understand it, Mr. Carter."

"Of course not, Mrs. Lock. What is this gentleman's name?"

"Oscar Gay."

It required all of the great detective's powers of control to conceal from Mrs. Lock the intense satisfaction which the information gave him.

"How did you come to know this Gay?"

"We boarded at the same place on West Forty-sixth street."

"What is his business?"

"He's a lawyer."

"Where is his office?"

"That I don't know."

"Of course not," muttered Nick.

"Now, then, Mrs. Lock, you thought you saw your husband shoot that girl?"

"God help me! Yes."

"Describe exactly what you saw."

"When I first went to the window, and sat down in plain view, I did not notice the office on the opposite side of the street."

"The boy said Mr. Woodford would not be gone ten minutes, and I looked at my watch to see whether he told the truth."

"Good!" exclaimed Nick. "What time was it?"

"Three minutes to five o'clock."

"Well?"

"As I put my watch away, I looked across the street into the opposite window."

"What did you see?"

"My husband and a girl, seemingly in some controversy. At that moment Victor looked across and saw me."

"That was when I drew back into partial concealment."

"Almost immediately afterward Victor crossed the room, and left by an opposite door. The girl sat down in a chair by a desk, and began to put on a glove."

"Scarcely two minutes had passed, when, to my surprise, I saw my husband walk back into the office from the opposite door."

"He came straight over toward the window, and seemed to be looking across at my window just for a moment."

"For an instant he disappeared from my view. In a few moments he came directly in front of the window. I saw he had a pistol in his hand."

"The girl was still busy with the glove. Without warning, he took deliberate aim, and fired. The girl fell back in the chair, and her head dropped forward on her chest."

"And he?"

"Why, he seemed to glance over toward my window, presenting his full face. Then he disappeared on the side of the window whence he came when he produced the pistol."

"Almost directly after, he crossed the room

once more, and again disappeared through the door by which he had entered."

"Then I rushed out of Mr. Woodford's office."

"In my dire distress and anxiety to get my child away from him I came to you, having heard that you scarcely ever failed in work intrusted to your care."

"Well, you did the best thing you ever did in your life, Mrs. Lock, when you came to me."

"Why?"

"Because you'll save your husband's honor, if not his life, and I think will regain not only your child, but his love also."

"My God! Do not taunt me!"

"I speak the truth, Mrs. Lock. The man whom you saw commit the crime was not your husband."

"Not my husband? Why, the clothes—that long, blonde mustache—the light, long hair—surely——"

"The clothes were a duplicate suit. The hair and mustache were false. The assassin was a well-arranged double of your husband, who took pains that you should see the deed done."

"There was a screen setting close by the window which could easily have been pushed across to shut off your view. But it wasn't."

"Why are you so sure it was a double—a disguised man who did the deed?"

"First, because the proof is clear that the crime was done with a full knowledge by the murderer that you saw it, and with due care that you should see it."

"Well?"

"Your husband, if capable of murder, would surely not have an object in doing it before your eyes, but on the contrary."

"Then you saw your husband leave the room at about two minutes before five?"

"Yes."

"I have the testimony of the elevator-boy

that he went right to the elevator, and descended to the street."

"Go on, please."

"It would take him some time to go around to the building in which Woodford's offices are situated, probably five minutes."

"Go on—go on!"

"He did go around, however, for Mr. Woodford said his boy told him that Redway came to the door and inquired for you almost before you had been gone ten seconds. You did not leave by the elevator?"

"No. I was so excited I rushed down the stairs."

"And he stepped out of the elevator while you were on the stairs going down."

"Good Heaven!"

"So, you see, your husband can prove a perfect alibi. The deed was done while he was going from his office to Woodford's."

"Has he furnished you with this proof?"

"No; he has gone to jail without a word of defense. When he returned, he found the girl dead."

"He then placed her body on the desk, with one arm near her head, and the other hanging by her side. Under this hand he placed his pistol."

"How do you know?"

"Because you say the assassin left the body leaning back in the chair. It was found in a different position."

"Because, according to your testimony, the assassin got the pistol from the desk where Redway kept it, and put it back there when he had finished his work."

"Why did Victor arrange the position of the body that way, and place the pistol under the hand?"

"To suggest suicide, and to shield the assassin. When the suicide theory would not hold, he was willing to be thought guilty rather than say a word to throw suspicion on the person he firmly believes killed Estelle Langdon."

"What person?"

"You. He believes you shot her from your position across the street and fled. The position of the body, and the wound, certainly gave that impression; for who could believe that the assassin would take a position in front of a public window to fire the shot?"

"And he did this—for me?"

"Can a man prove his love more completely?"

Mrs. Lock let her face fall into her hands, while the hot tears trickled from between her fingers, and she sobbed:

"Oh, Victor, Victor!"

Nick let her alone in her weeping.

When she finally dried her eyes and looked up, he asked:

"Have you—do you own a pistol, Mrs. Lock?"

"Yes."

"And had it with you this afternoon?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

"Shrewdly guessed it. Redway knew you had it?"

"He did?"

Mrs. Lock's face flushed, and Nick did not ask her to tell him how Redway knew it.

He took Redway's pistol from his pocket and showed it to her.

"Is your pistol like this?"

"It is a duplicate. Victor bought the two at the same time. Mine has his initials on it and his has mine."

"Then he thought there would be no danger of the bullet and his pistol not corresponding," smiled Nick.

"Who could the disguised assassin have been?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I guess? Why, who do I know—surely not——"

"Yes. Oscar Gay."

"Merciful Heaven! What was his object?"

"First, to get rid of a wife."

"A wife?"

"He and your cousin, I think we'll find, were privately married. By fixing the crime on Redway, he would remove your husband. In that way he expected to free himself and you, and make his marriage with you easy."

"But I never would have married him."

"Don't be too sure."

"I didn't love him."

"But you loved your child?"

"Yes, yes!"

"I am willing to risk my professional reputation on the guess that he has the little girl's whereabouts in his possession, and would have used her to get your consent to become his wife."

Mrs. Lock shuddered.

Just then a knock came to the door. The servant announced that Miss Ida had returned and wished to report.

"Admit her," was Nick's command.

CHAPTER IX.

CHICK SUPPLIES THE FINAL PROOF.

Ida was introduced to Mrs. Lock, and then she proceeded to make her report.

She had visited the dead girl's boarding-place in Harlem, where she learned that Estelle was in the habit of spending the night elsewhere, occasionally at the house of an aunt somewhere in the suburbs, it was understood.

She had gone away the night previous to remain with this aunt, but returned unexpectedly quite late. She told her room-mate that her aunt was not at home.

For the first time Miss Langdon had a pistol in her possession with her initials, "E. L.," engraved on the handle.

Her room-mate said Estelle explained that she bought the pistol to shoot cats, which annoyed them, at nights, from the back yards.

To prove her sincerity, she had gotten up in the night, and fired a shot at a serenading feline.

Ida's report was not what Nick hoped it might be, but just as she went out Chick came in, and he brought news that made Nick's eyes glisten.

"I've run down my man," said Chick, in a tone of satisfaction, after being introduced to Mrs. Lock and told by Nick to go ahead.

"Let us hear about it," urged Nick, eagerly.

"Just as you thought he would, Gay returned to the Borden Building about eight o'clock.

"He went up to his office, and came down in disguise.

"Had it been in day-time, I should never have thought the old chap was Gay."

"The old chap?"

"He was disguised as an old man."

Nick instantly recalled the circumstance of the old man who had inquired of the elevator-boy for the offices of Bridgely & Byke.

The detective had no doubt now that Gay had returned to the building in that disguise, and got into Byke's private office, where he had been hidden all day, hearing and seeing that which went on in Redway's office.

"I followed him to a room on the Bowery. He was in that room about twenty minutes. When he came out, he was again in disguise, but the nature of the masquerade this time made my task of identification easy."

"What was it this time?"

"An almost perfect counterpart of Victor Redway as you described him to me.

"He had a cab waiting at the sidewalk. I suspected that the cab was there for his use, and I had one ready to follow. He lost no time in getting over to Brooklyn. I didn't lose him *en route*.

"He drove to a house on Atlantic avenue, and went in. When he came out, he had a little girl with him whom he handed into the cab, got in after her, and was driven away."

"A little girl!" gasped Mrs. Lock, with a hand pressed to her heart.

"The original of the picture in Redway's watch," said Chick.

"Oh, Heavens! My child—Estelle!"

"Do not get excited, Mrs. Lock," cautioned Nick. "The little girl will not be harmed, and will be safely in your arms in good time."

"But, sir, she is in his hands—in the hands of a murderer."

"He will not harm a hair of her head. She is too important for the successful carrying out of his plans."

"Well, disguised as Victor Redway, he had no trouble in getting the little girl away from the people in whose charge her father had placed her.

"He had, evidently dogged Redway's steps and thus found out the girl's hiding-place after you confided your story to him."

"What does he intend to do with her?"

"Hide her away till Redway shall be out of his path. Then make her the price of your marriage to him."

"I have the hiding-place located," said Chick.

"Where is it?"

"On Ninth avenue, with Granny Grimes."

"Well, he has a seasoned old wretch for a jailer, that's certain."

"Oh, what shall I do?" moaned Mrs. Lock.

"Do? Why, you must not return to your boarding-house. Your change of feeling toward Gay might arouse his suspicions."

"Then where shall I go?"

"Suppose you stay here as the guest of Mrs. Carter till to-morrow morning?"

Mrs. Lock consented to Nick's arrangements, and while Mrs. Carter and Ida were making her as comfortable as possible Nick and Chick went out on a little private business.

At exactly midnight the Tombs received another prisoner.

Oscar Gay, looking like a walking corpse, was led into the gloomy prison, and securely locked into a cell in murderer's row.

Next morning he was found dead on his cot.

No one will ever know where he had concealed the poison which ended his miserable life; for Nick and Chick had searched him carefully before they locked him up.

When Redway was released, he made a full explanation.

Nick's deductions had been almost entirely correct.

When Redway found the dead girl collapsed in her chair on his return from the unsuccessful attempt to see his wife in Woodford's office, he became convinced that Evelyn had fired the deadly shot.

The position of the body, and the nature of the wound, confirmed him in his belief.

He examined his pistol, which he found in the drawer where he had placed it that morning when Miss Langdon returned it to him. She gave it to him with one chamber empty, and he had found it with one chamber empty. So he naturally concluded it had not been discharged since the night before.

He did not know that in his absence that forenoon Miss Langdon must have put a cartridge in the empty cylinder.

When Redway "planted" the pistol beneath the dead girl's hand he supposed the empty chamber was the same from which she had discharged the shot at the cat.

It turned out that Gay secured Miss Langdon her position with Bridgely & Byke; also that Redway at once recognized her as his wife's cousin, but to keep his own identity a secret, did not let her know of his relationship to her, after having tested her with a suppositional story of a client, which was really his wife's story.

Miss Langdon had recognized her cousin when the latter left Redway's office that afternoon. For some reason she associated Mrs. Lock's visit with Gay, because she had heard her give Redway her address, which she knew was Gay's boarding-place. She was in

anely jealous of Gay, and suspected him of treachery.

In that loud interview with Redway, after he returned from seeing Mrs. Lock to the elevated station, Estelle admitted that she had borrowed his pistol—which had formerly been a present from Redway to his wife, "E. L."—to kill Gay the night before, and then herself, if he refused to absolve from her oath, not to betray their relationship by word or act till he gave his consent.

He had failed to meet her, however, at their secret tryst, and had avoided her next day.

Nick believes she had sent for him to have Gay's footsteps dogged.

Gay, in his concealment, heard her threats against his life, and also overheard all that passed between Redway and Evelyn. He foresaw final reconciliation between the couple, and knew that he could only win by sudden and desperate steps.

Fortune seemed to favor him. When he saw Mrs. Lock in the window opposite, and heard Redway leave the office, his impulse carried him away. In a flash he had assumed Redway's disguise, slipped out into the hall, and entered through the large office to Redway's room, where he coolly killed his victim before the eyes of the woman he was willing to sell his soul to possess.

Thence he walked downstairs, and went to his room on the Bowery, taking many chances of meeting the real Redway on the way.

In his Bowery den, he changed once more to his everyday stylish clothes, and returned to the building to confront Redway.

His original design in duplicating Redway's clothes, and getting the false wig and mustache which made him so true a double, must have been to get possession of little Estelle in the manner which he so suddenly put into practice.

Victor Redway Lock and Evelyn Lock

were restored to each other's love and confidence.

Their lives were so thoroughly reunited that no more false reports of malicious enemies can ever part them again.

Chick found little Estelle unharmed in Granny Grimes's miserable lodgings, and placed the child in the arms of the mother she had almost forgotten.

The happy little family are living peacefully and quietly on their lovely English estate.

They never tire of talking about Nick Carter's wonderful professional skill in saving them from the almost successful plots of Oscar Gay.

THE END.

The next number of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY will contain "The Best Detective in the Country; or, A Prompt Reply to a Telegram."

LATEST ISSUES.

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